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Copyright Film Art

Editorial

In Spring, 1934, a footnote to an article in this paper deplored the neglect of puppet and model films.* The puppet, at least, is no longer neglected, and is likely to rank with the animated cartoon as a standard ingredient of commercial programmes. This is welcome, for it widens still more the popular idea of the scope of the cinema. Moreover the puppet films are themselves using a greater range of styles and themes than does the animated cartoon. Len Lye's *Birth of the Robot*, Pal's films for Philips and *On Parade* are commercial advertising; Ptushko's *New Gulliver* is political satire; Starevitch and Bertrand in France, and the Diehls in Germany, make straightforward fairy tales. All these have their own distinct styles. Compared with them the lack of anything but technical progress in cartoons is alarming. Ever since McCay produced, in 1911, a film about an anthropomorphic mosquito, the cartoon has been over concerned with comic zoology. The tendency has been well satirized by a "New Yorker" picture showing a studio full of Micey Mouse making a cartoon of a man in a bowler hat. Nowadays there is less variation than in the pre-talkie years, when we had amongst others the Functionalism of Fisher's Mutt and Jeff, the Jehovah Complex and Visual Physics of Fleischer's *Out of the Inkwell*, the Pictorial Punning of Sullivan's *Felix the Cat*, and the curious *Alice* series of Disney himself. Except in the educational film, and a few experiments not generally exhibited, the cartoon film is stagnant.

Theoretically the cartoon has the widest range of all film processes. Given enough labour, any film can be made by it, so far as appearance goes. It can do directly what the camera can do only indirectly. Nevertheless, although appearances may be identical, the camera introduces a mental sense of reality to audiences that know the scene has been photographed. There is the conviction that the screen represents something that has actually happened. This makes a fundamental distinction between the cartoon and the puppet film. The magic of animated puppets is thus greater than the magic of a cartoon where, as a matter of course, anything is more than likely to happen. Model films are the documentaries of fairyland.

They can be more than this. They exist only because cinema time has holes in it, twenty-four a second. Through these holes invisible forces operate with perfect alibis. Thus it is possible to show mechanisms working in worlds with any laws of nature that can be imagined, or with only one natural law at a time, a property that permits the construction of educational models unobscured by the constraints and makeshifts necessary to secure their existence in the real world. Also it is possible to mimic natural phenomena not ordinarily reproducible, a gift capable of

* Film Art No 3, Idealism in Cartoons, by Robert Fairthorne.

abuse. Shortly after the eruption of Mont Pelé in 1902, a commercial film was made in France (we believe by Mélié) in which the disaster was reconstructed with models. When the spiral of film progress comes back to this point we will be some way towards exploiting the possibilities of the film.

Immortalising Films

The Museum of Modern Art Film Library, of New York, have again increased the great value of their collection. The Director, John Abbott, and the Curator, Iris Barry, made a trip to Europe last year and got hold of copies of many films of intrinsic and historic value. Some of these were thought to have disappeared, and it is with heartfelt relief that we see that a copy of Pabst's *Jeanne Ney* is now in safe keeping. The list of Mr. Abbott's and Miss Barry's finds makes the mouth water.

Rene Clair's *Paris qui Dort* (1923), a sequence of *The Golem* (1920), Man Ray's *Emak Bakia* (1927), also—reviving tender and youthful memories—parts of the French serial film *Juve Against Fantomas* (1914, contemporary with *The Perils of Pauline*), Dulac's *Seashell and the Clergyman* (1929) which gave rise to that famous saying of the British Board of Film Censors: "This film is meaningless; if there is a meaning it is doubtless objectionable." Mr. Leslie Woods of London has presented several very early films from all countries. Old members of the Amateur Cinematographer's Association may remember Mr. Woods gratefully for giving a show of a very early Italian version of *Judith and Holofernes*. A part of this collection consists of thirteen Gaumont films, made between 1908 and 1910, two of which the present writer has seen in a commercial programme. (Films remained in circulation for a long time in pre-war years.) An interesting fact is that most of these are trick or puppet films, a form of production more suited to singlehanded work than animated cartoons.

To call these films a collection is to invite misunderstanding. Copies are made and arranged as complete programmes, historical and regional. The programme may then be hired by colleges, museums and film study groups. The films are preserved as living things, not as lengths of celluloid in tins.

The importance of this work lies more in the future than to-day. It is possible that the first thirty years of the film is its Elizabethan age, and without such an institution posterity can have no First Folio, nor any folio at all. Inspection of the programmes of the Museum makes one marvel at the amazing artistic achievement of the cinema since the first commercial show in Paris in 1894. Can any other art, even when free from the very basely founded commercialism attending the childhood of the film, show so much good work in a period of forty years? In the rate of production of trash all arts are equal.

ERICH VON STROHEIM

by HERMAN G. WEINBERG

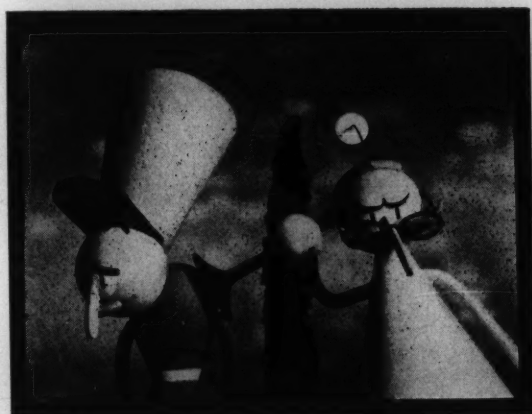
When Eisenstein visited America he was asked what, in the American cinema, he admired most. He replied: "Chaplin, von Stroheim and Walt Disney."

As for Chaplin and Disney, they have had accolade enough showered upon them, by native and visiting celebrity alike. Our concern is with Stroheim, whose unhappy art flowered for a decade, then withered and died, plucked by the hands of the money-grubbers and the fake morality tutored by the Haysian regime in Hollywood. Stroheim's uncompromising realism struck a sympathetic chord with Eisenstein and it is natural that the two should have admired each other's work. But whereas Eisenstein was working in a Socialistic state, where the movie was regarded as something more than an innocuous diversion, Stroheim worked in the hot-house atmosphere of that great citadel of reaction—Hollywood. Eisenstein shelled a decadent capitalistic society from the vast plains of the USSR, which served as an objective stand from which he could hurl those projectiles—*Potemkin*, *Ten Days*, *Old and New*—shattering the hypocritical complacency of a Europe which confused its death rattle with the crunch of tanks, the thud of regimented hordes and the megalomaniacal screeching of dictators. Stroheim bored from within, and while Eisenstein knocked off Europe's armour plate, he dissected an aristocracy in its last stages of sophisticated decay with the precision and effectiveness of a surgeon's scalpel.

Stroheim revealed the great festering wound which was eating away the heart of this society. *The Merry Widow* and *The Wedding March*—not projectiles, surely, but subtle and insinuating cups of poison. Kings, queens, princes, great barons, wealthy industrialists, the glittering haut-monde—Locomotor-ataxia, haemophilia, nymphomania, satyriasis, perversions, gluttony, rape. This was Stroheim's "High-world." His brief war scenes in the lamentably unfinished *Merry-Go-Round* had all the terrible indictment of those in *The End of St. Petersburg*. In *Greed* he ripped the last shreds of clothing off the bodies of man as an animal and cried: "For shame!" The spectacle he revealed was shameful enough, but the disclosure only made him enemies and his eventual social ostracism was sealed with the mutilation of this film—a mutilation that endeavoured to lessen the shock of this whining, pitiful creature that God was supposed to have created in His own image, and which Stroheim revealed so mercilessly under his microscope. But Stroheim disowned the adulterated version of his masterpiece (as he had disowned every one of his preceding



A further still from the **Film Art** Trinidad production, directed by Irene Nicholson and Brian Montagu on behalf of the **Trinidad Guardian**, now nearing completion.



The puppet films of Georges Pál have become increasingly popular in this country, as they combine good cinema with good advertising. The above illustrations are from some of his latest films, including the Horlick Malted Milk one **On Parade**, discussed in this number. (Illustrations by courtesy of **Shelf Appeal**, a magazine devoted to the art of advertising.)

and succeeding works, all of which were similarly mutilated) just as Eisenstein, years later, was to disown the adulterated and perverted version of his great epic of the Mexican people **Que Viva Mexico!**

In truth, both men had much in common.

But Eisenstein's art persists in its growth, fostered by a new society. Stroheim's was ferreted out and uprooted, by a vicious clique that answered all guarantees of "freedom of expression," democracy," "integrity of the artist," etc., with a sardonic smile.

Once, a rumour penetrated that Stroheim wished to go to Russia. What happened about this, no one seems to know. But now, thanks to an unexpected inheritance and the help of several friends, word comes that we will once again hear from von Stroheim. Perhaps he will film his novel, **Paprika**, a gypsy prose rhapsody published here last Fall. Let us hope it is true.

Yet, what strange destiny for a man!

Is his name really Erich von Stroheim? Is he really a former lieutenant of the old Imperial Austrian Guard, the son of a great Bohemian nobleman? Is he not, rather, a creature from another world, marvellously possessed of a mysterious spirit, a monster caparisoned to mystify the throng?

This much we know: He lived in Vienna at the height of its dying imperial splendour, before the hounds of Europe brought her to bay, a graceful, wounded stag. Stroheim lived in the Vienna of dainty carriages with their rigid lackeys, trotting along on their light springs, making their carefree way to Schönbrunn; the Vienna of a thousand glistening lights flickering in the Prater, lighting up the gaiety at Sacher's, reflecting its sparkling brandy in the saucer-like eyes of its gypsy demi-mondaines. . .

Sabre-scarred and monocled. . . Hearts filled with chivalry, souls filled with poetry, the young Uhlan officers lived, danced and loved. When the war came, they left, forgetting to pay their tailor bills—but they did not hesitate to fight and die brilliantly at Piave. One could see them near the Cathedral de St. Etienne in 1922, asking for alms in the courtyard. Black glasses covered their burning eyes, and in the hot swirling dust they dragged their poor tattered military rags, still clinging to their withered frames, from which dangled torn epaulets. . .

Others, more fortunate, or—maybe—less fortunate, became gigolos, confidence men, or forgers . . . and then, when the artificial years of inflation collapsed, they, too, collapsed, and wound up in prisons. . .

Only one among them knew how to turn defeat into glory—into millions. Only one among them knew how to, phoenix-like, re-create the Imperial Court of Vienna out of the ashes left by the awful years of holocaust.

The Imperial Austria of old! Shattered by defeat, it returned more brilliant, gayer and more glittering than ever—in the films made by Erich von Stroheim in Hollywood.

Into the heavy, wholesome diet that the American movie public consumed before his advent, he subtly poured a few drops of venom.

First came *The Pinnacle*, then *Foolish Wives*, that subtle and perverse sexual comedy which was exploited by Universal as "The First Million Dollar Picture," with an electric sign on Times Square changed daily as the production cost sheet mounted—which shenanigans was subsequently to react as a boomerang to von Stroheim and gain him an unwarranted reputation for insane extravagance.

In *The Pinnacle* Stroheim, himself, portrayed a little weasel of an Austrian officer on a holiday in the Swiss Alps, with just enough energy to attempt to seduce every woman he met. Eventually, he gets himself thrown from a high cliff by a jealous husband. The title was a symbolic one—nor did the symbolism run to an esoteric deck of cards somewhere in the film. In *Foolish Wives*, Stroheim again played a similar Austrian officer on a holiday, this time in pre-War Monte Carlo. For his seductions he winds up with a knife in his back and his body thrown with that of a dead cat into a sewer. Retribution has always run riot in the Stroheim films. They were the most moral things imaginable. The villain invariably got his in his end, in the most unsavoury manner Stroheim could devise.

Thanks to him, the women and young girls of America learned to prefer the slick, insolent archdukes, whose kisses burned like the lash of a whip, to the bucolic American heroes. Stroheim was the true creator of a "sophisticated" cinema.

But the art of the "sophisticated" cinema was degraded, corrupted and commercialized by others.

Dilettantes appeared, with all the surface polish and superficial tricks which Stroheim could not or would not have. Let us be generous and name no names. It is true, Stroheim's technique was frequently distressingly static, for a motion-picture, but his individual scenes were so heavy-laden with thought, so beautifully prepared, lighted and composed, that one easily forgave him a lack of movement, pace and camera angles. Stroheim had always something to say, and knew how to say it, which was more important.

And then Stroheim did the thing that suddenly made him great—he broke the rules of an art which he created.

When he had gained all that he wanted, when he had lost all taste and feeling for money, he suddenly began to know anguish and despair. Torment followed.

He made Greed (from Frank Norris' *McTeague*) into which he poured all his soul. Flying in the face of the box-office, he made a film that was the negation of what the entire motion-picture industry in America had been built upon. He not only flew in the face of the box-office—he spat in its eye. For once the screen would tell a measure of truth, even if it killed von Stroheim to do it (which it did—the mutilation of Greed snuffed out the divine spark that kindled in the artist and left a broken and bitter man).

Greed was the apotheosis of the ugly, the sordid, in human beings. The film opened with a quatrain:

“Gold, gold, gold,
Molten, yellow, hard and rolled,
Hard to get and hard to hold—
Gold, gold, gold. . . .”

From that opening title to the last shot in the desert of Death Valley, with the bewildered *McTeague*, handcuffed to the body of the dead Marcus, going insane from thirst, and a few yards off a bag of gold coins spilled out futilely on the scorched terrain, Stroheim told a story of greed that struck home so deep in the hearts of all who saw it that many hated the film (in Berlin they hissed it off the screen), and it was the biggest failure at the box-office of its time.

It was dedicated: “To my mother.”

The very photography stank of the squalor it sought to depict. But Greed was beautiful, as truth is beautiful.

The fake morality tutored by Hollywood would not let Stroheim have his masterpiece. They cut it. From seventy reels it had been reduced, grudgingly, by its creator, to forty reels—beyond that Stroheim would not cut it. They called in a hack who brought it down to a regulation ten. Its elements of greatness were but partially discernible in the version released to the public. Whole episodes, upon which he had laboured for weeks and months, were lopped off, and swept away on the cutting room floor. Stroheim disowned it, just as he was to subsequently disown the milk-sop version of his sly comedy, *The Merry Widow*, in which he sought to depict the decadence in the old royal family of Vienna. Those who saw the original version of Stroheim's *Merry Widow* said it was a shrewd and sardonic thing. The version shown was but a step better than the usual Ruritarian operetta stuff—but it had infinitely more verve than Lubitch's version which was so Americanized that all the glamour and mystery of the original was lost.

In **The Wedding March** (and its sequel, **Marriage of the Prince**) Stroheim strove to become the Goya of the films. Necromancer of the spirit, he liberated the instincts which he had repressed so long. . . .

It was these instincts that gave us those twisted, tortured candelabras (from which Sternberg was later to borrow for **The Scarlet Empress**) whose translucent flames were agitated by the wind; those nightmarish lights from behind which emerged an ebony crucifix; the weather-beaten faces of soldiers; the horrible, grimacing, laughing faces; the exotic foods, chaotic visions mixed with orgies and cemeteries . . . the rape in the butcher's shop with thick blood oozing all around and a pale little girl struggling on the stone floor . . . and another girl, the pathetic little cripple in a wedding gown, with horror stricken eyes, prostrating herself on the stones in a deserted chapel before the Madonna. . . .

Then America got angry.

It pronounced Stroheim a madman.

You cannot defy a young and healthy nation with impunity—its people are not interested in lecherous, demented worlds.

The Wedding March, cut by alien hands again, and again disowned by its creator, was released without benefit of its sequel, which carried the story to its logical conclusion. Paramount was through with Stroheim. So was MGM, Universal and Pat Powers (who backed **The Wedding March**). No one would have anything to do with a director who could not discipline himself to tell a film story as everyone else did, in the regulation eight or ten reels and in such a form as would not require the inevitable wholesale censorial deletions which characterized every Stroheim film to date.

But the winning personality of the man was not to be downed even yet. He persuaded Joseph P. Kennedy, the Wall Street financier, to give him financial backing for an original story, **Queen Kelly**, set in Africa, Berlin and Chicago. It was to serve as a starring vehicle for Gloria Swanson. After a reputed 850,000 dollars had been spent on it and three months had elapsed and Stroheim was just getting started, La Swanson objected to the character she was playing (the Madame of a fashionable bordello), slapped von Stroheim on the set and stormed off in a rage.

This was the end of von Stroheim. The dizzy decline of the idol followed. He was reproached for his megalomania, his arrogance—his wanton spending, brought about chiefly through an almost fanatical insistence on realism and fidelity of detail. The producers resented his insolent demeanour, the eternal monocle stuck in his eye. They tore up his contracts. They ruined him financially. Alone, without even a servant, he lived in thirty immense, cold rooms, from which his creditors had removed furniture, rugs, sculpture, books. He sought refuge in a hotel—he drank heavily. To make a living, he accepted bit parts in absurd films.

He wrote bad articles which he filled with blunt pornography. The man was cracking up—and no wonder! One felt ashamed and squirmed in one's seat while watching Stroheim, broken and defeated, playing a ham actor's part in so ridiculous and cheap a film as *The Great Gabbo*, directed by a man who had not a tenth of Stroheim's talent.

A spring had snapped—he did not recover.

His own son, a youth of 18, brought him a summons for non-payment of his wife's alimony. At a hearing before the judge, Stroheim confessed that his worldly goods consisted of but eight dollars.

America turns a cold shoulder to those who dare to frighten her. . . .

But here he is again. He returns!

To say what? To do what?

He will film his novel, *Paprika*, they say. *Paprika* is purposely scandalous, exaggerated, heavily erotic; "slang" mixed with Germanisms becomes uncouth; but occasionally from its depths there comes a cry, bursting like a flash of lightning—a flash behind which we see the old Stroheim.

Will he succeed? We can doubt it or not. The world of 1936 is a different world from the one that witnessed the birth and development of Stroheim's inspired art.

He no longer seeks death. It is life he now seeks.

But this phantom who returns among us, dressed in an old cashmere dressing robe, burned full of cigarette holes; this phantom who comes back with his blasé, tired look—still wearing his monocle; is he not a more touching, more vital figure than those happy men before whom the road of life passes straight and clear?

With a view to drawing attention to good films, the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures, New York, an organisation composed of members of cultural, educational and civic societies, has published, in the December issue of *Film Daily*, the result of their investigation into the best film made outside America in 1936. First place was given to *Kermesse Héroïque* by Feyder. Second came *New Earth* by Joris Ivens.

The *Everyman Theatre* at Hampstead (London) has had the novel idea of having a *Surrealist* and *Avant-Garde* season, and the films being presented include the Hoppin-Gross cartoon *Joie de Vivre*, Len Lye's *Colour Box* and *Rainbow Dance*, the much discussed *Night on the Bare Mountain* and Vigo's interesting *Zéro de Conduite*.

A new book on films is being prepared for press entitled *Cinema Survey*, in which Robert Herring is writing on the Film as an Entertainment, Bryher on the Film in Education and Dallas Bower (author of *Plan for Cinema*, reviewed in *Film Art* No. 7) on the Film and the Social Scene. The illustrations are by Oswald Blakeston.

On November 9th, 1936, the "Newsreels" announced the fall of Madrid. Some included shots of Franco's victorious troops entering the city. If this habit grows, the newsreel editors would do well to keep handy copies of *Things to Come* and Abel Gance's *End of the World*.

RAYMOND SPOTTISWOODE CRITICISED

by LEONARD HACKER

Readers of Raymond Spottiswoode's *Grammar of the Film* will note a page (123) entitled "a fallacy," deriding my idea of the Dissolve as a basis of film editing rather than the conventional cut (*Film Art* No. 3). I object to this criticism not because I may be in error (which I believe not) but because Mr. Spottiswoode omitted vital sentences from this very short essay which should have been quoted in full before being criticised. The confusion he credits to me he thereby causes himself by this omission.

It would appear that the cut and the Dissolve are two distinct film techniques. Mr. Spottiswoode would have us believe that there is an antagonism in this difference, which those who penetrate sufficiently deep into film form will see it is not so. In probing for definite forms and techniques purely of the cinema and impossible to other arts, one comes inevitably to the conclusion that the Dissolve is the true basis of film editing with the cut as incidental. No other art form can accomplish the Dissolve, that is the Dissolve in motion that presents evolving forms before our eyes, whereas the method of straight cutting is the method of all past art in various degrees of complexity and in the film is more akin to still photography than to cinema. Although successions of stills may in itself be sufficient as a cinema form it is not purely of the cinema, and can be duplicated by photomontage on a pasteboard or album. We do not have to have continuous motion picture film for such a method.

Omitting the content of films, films as entertainment, or films as political weapons, or films for education, the one distinct difference, the one too often overlooked, between the motion picture and other mediums is the essential fact that in the cinema we have pictures that move inherently within the frame against other pictures that do not in painting, drawing, etching and the rest. The most perfect cinema would be one whose frame never needed to be shifted, which contained one continuous evolving scene without cuts, dissolves or panoramas and other methods of joining film pieces. Theoretically this is the only perfect cinema, but because in actuality it is practically impossible to obtain sufficient action within one shot to sustain a full length motion picture, it is necessary to resort to the joining of myriad diverse images into a unity by editing. The simplest method is naturally the straight cut, permitting of all sorts of image combinations and the thoughts or ideas they represent regardless of what they mean in themselves.

In a contrast to cut montage I expounded, however briefly in **Film Art 3**, a method of perpetual dissolve as an experiment in discovering a more substantial basis of film editing, less susceptible to hit and miss combinations and derived from the organic unity of a theme presented, whatever that theme or content may be. By the perpetual dissolve one image grows out of the other, is born of it, and thereby logically and effectively brings to consciousness whatever it is that is being said through images. In this way the content of images evolve from within the scenes rather than just "put together" after pictures are taken. In order to use the perpetual dissolve a film must be so thoroughly planned in advance that there can be no mistaking of the content to be expressed. No one but the maker could edit such a film and make sense out of it, whereas the cut is open to all sorts of ambiguity as many original producers have learned to their sorrow when others did the cutting for them. The dissolve method in itself demands an organic unity. In thus conforming to it any number of purely cinematic themes can be born of it. It actually generates an original film form.

The Dissolve is not antagonistic to the Cut, but includes the Cut within itself. With the Dissolve as the method of joining, the Cut serves logically as a means of contrast within the Dissolve technique. Whatever it is that needs contrasting stands out clearly and unmistakably. Practically every film ever made has used cut montage as the basis in editing, and that is why the film cannot find itself as a distinct art. Despite the highly evolved complexities of cut montage evolved in recent years this method can be said to be only a more advanced and further extension of the art methods of the past, a legitimate enough form of cinema, but still not yet purely of the cinema. The perpetual dissolve is clearly the answer to the problem. Previously the dissolve was used only in isolated cases, to describe characters' thoughts, to move swiftly from place to place, to make rapid transitions requiring otherwise long intervals of time. Such uses are born of the novel, the stage play and narratives generally. **The Last Laugh** was perhaps the only film to use the Dissolve as a basis, and this was the underlying reason of its startlingly new form and rhythms. Imitated on all sides ever since, no one has been able to duplicate its method or even approach the unity of its content. In this film the basic Dissolve actually eliminated the need for subtitles or speech. Hollywood films are lavish with use of Dissolves, but all such uses are dilettante and are employed only in instances described. The Russian film theorists, in order to be completely different from Hollywood, have sunk to the extreme of not using Dissolves at all. One can see from this how the basic technique of cinema has been left to flounder between half acceptance and complete rejection.

Is Mr. Spottiswoode afraid even to think of experimenting with an untried basic technique? Is he fearful lest some cherished and perhaps petrified doctrine born of cut montage will be dissolved by the Dissolve?

This brings us to the philosophical uses of the Dissolve, the vital part omitted in Mr. Spottiswoode's criticism but stated clearly in **Film Art 3**. "By its means we also infer mental alchemy or transmutation by which conflicts and prejudices may be melted out or dissolved quietly and painlessly into higher and deeper realizations of consciousness and unity." No other art of the past has had the power to do this, yet Mr. Spottiswoode rejects it without reason.

"The Dissolve is a physio-chemical device where the cut is but physical." Mr. S. criticizes thus: "It must be supposed on this argument (is it an argument?) that the benighted Greeks who were ignorant not only of biochemistry but of inorganic chemistry, should have abandoned art because their knowledge of this foundation was miserably tenuous." No such implication was suggested in my essay. Because the Greeks knew nothing of the Dissolve or chemistry does not lessen the great art of the Greeks, neither does it make modern cinema inferior or superior. The cinema is a new art with its own mechanics and its own aesthetic problems. Such new form does not negate past art forms but rather clarifies them, reveals their evolutionary perspectives. There is no need for argument.

"A book written in ink is no better than the same written in pencil." Whoever said it was? What has such irrelevant comparison to do with the basic structures of film?

"Degrees of chemicality cannot be established," states Mr. S. Degrees of chemicality certainly can be established, are established, always have been and can be proven by millions of examples. Any chemist can show varying degrees of chemicality and anyone can witness in his own body (and mind) varying degrees of chemical (and thought) equilibriums that maintain the life of his organism. Mr. S. does admit that degrees of conflict can be established, but denies that degrees of unity can be established. If sharp physical objects conflict then the inverse is true, the chemical constituents of the same can be melted out until they join in harmony. Any physician can prove this in physical disease as well as in mental, where such conflicts are established. The cure is always chemical, whether mental or physical. Psychoanalysis is a mental chemistry. Medicine is a physical chemistry. Mr. S. continues:

"A contention such as this can nowhere be attacked with certainty, since it is founded on faith and argued by evasion." Why cannot it be attacked with certainty? Because it is invulnerable and beyond attack. One cannot attack a mediator, which the Dissolve really is. There is no Achilles heel in a device that combines all polarities into unity. Can Mr. S. name any argument that is not founded on faith? It is only his faith that makes him argue. The Dissolve is not a "faith," since it is not born of argument but by its nature dissolves all reason for argument by reason of its all-encompassing power, unifying polarities of every kind and degree.



From the UFA Documentary **Heavenly Metal**, directed by Walter Ruttmann.





This reproduction is a scene from the Albers-Ucicky-Wagner film **Savoy Hotel** 217, first presented in this country by the **Curzon Cinema**, London, and recently shown by the **Oxford Film Society**. (7.2.37.)

No one-sided believer wants his faith upset. Hence he argues. He argues only to justify his ego, not to reveal truth. He argues only when he knows he will win out over a weaker force. But such winning is no victory. Truth for ever comes between the poles. It cannot reside in any one pole unless that one includes the two, that is, recognizes and joins with its opposite. In every pair of antagonisms of any kind and degree reside two complements that are the hidden first cause of their meeting. To discover the complement means to recognize oneself in the opposition. Where such recognition is lacking we have antagonism—war. Where such recognition is present we have a higher way of life, capable of further progression into "ever higher and deeper levels of consciousness and unity." The film *Dissolve* can do much to clarify the opposites in contemporary problems and "quietly and painlessly" melt out all conflicts into complements.

Philosophically then, Mr. Spottiswoode belongs to a cut cult which insists upon (with penalty of extinction to all who oppose) a fixed and set principle of screen editing known as cut montage. This cult is miserable unless it cuts not only films but society in general. Its methods then are barbaric and "mediaeval," using the vicious and painful methods of the past to "unify" the social order, sharpening antagonisms to the greatest possible degree and taking stock of the results only after the results of such conflict are revealed. Such one-sidedness naturally fails to credit the superior thought of modern philosophy which combines physics and chemistry into a greater unity. The cut cult credits the existence of physics but denies chemistry. Inclusion of chemistry would naturally dissolve this petrified ego, hence the opposition to it. When one perceives the underlying philosophy of the *Dissolve*, the childishness of the cut cult becomes more increasingly apparent.

The film does not develop, artistically or in any other way, in a vacuum. Forecasters of its future would do well to consult the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Departmental Committee on Cinematograph Films (H.M.S.O., 7/6). Amongst a wealth of information on all aspects of the cinema they will find that, at the end of 1934, there were 4,305 cinemas in Great Britain, with a seating capacity of 3,872,000, and 963,000,000 admissions per year. There are nine people over fifteen years to every seat, a ratio identical with that in the U.S.A. Does the future lie with the super-cinema and super-production, or with a more flexible method of viewing, approximating to the home show, with films for less universal audiences?

Arthur Elton and W. H. Auden have attempted to apply the technique of the documentary film to books on technical subjects for the general reader. The first of these, on aeronautics (*Why Aeroplanes Fly*. The March of Time Series. By A. Elton and R. A. Fairthorne. Longmans, Green, 2/6) explains the principles of flight in terms of everyday experience, and—a departure from convention—treats air transport, not as a scientific curiosity, but as a definite part of the mechanism of contemporary life. The book has been well received by journals as varied as *Flight*, *The Morning Post*, and *The Daily Worker*.

PAVLOV and FILM ART

by DAVID STEIN

We have at last reached the time when attempts can be made to set out in orderly fashion man's knowledge of himself. Marx, Darwin, Pavlov: we will not dispute their relative importance to us as men, but as students of film there can be no dispute about the primary importance of Pavlov. Since his work there can be no more facile divisions of human beings into soul, brain and body. In all our future films we can assume their unity.

The mind is a highly sensitized part of the body. The body acts as a sensation collecting organization which conveys the disturbance to the brain. So the fingers can, in love making, be as much in an ecstasy as the mind. The tremors that disturb the whole frame then, reveal the sensitive nature of the body. It is possible that on this occasion, the brain's delicate sensibility passes to a certain degree to the body. Between the sexual region and the brain, there must then exist a greater state of tension than is normally the case. The two erogenous zones cannot be isolated. In the one is the sensation pure, in the other—the brain—is the secondary sensation, the actual intoxication. But they are so linked they should be regarded as one.

If in this hyper-sensitive state, the body becomes as acute a sense organ as the brain; does not this show that the normal restricted sensual condition of the body is a limited phase of its life?

The most sensitive people have been sensitive all over, fingers, eyes, brain. This is a pointer along the path film art should travel. Beethoven has power to subdue the individual's daily struggle to keep his body and his brain apart; the two become fused through listening to his music and a love ecstasy is produced. It is obvious why, in this world to-day, the body should be intentionally reduced from an organism which can be likened to the suburbs of the brain to a separate coat of armour—from an organic to an inorganic structure. It is the task of the present time to reduce this artificial distinction.

How deeply Wordsworth saw—into the mind of things—when the heart ceased beating and the body became a living soul—a spirit far more deeply interfused—in the living air—that was in all things.

This synthesis, when, like an orchestra, human society will achieve unity through diversity, has long been the aspiration of artists. It is characteristic of the dialectical method that that aim should be achieved by the realization of the whole body as one unit and not as two.

So through this discussion of the effect of love on the body-brain unit, it seems clear there is only one organism concerned, and that the body is only a condition of the mind—its expression. Or, in the other way, that

the brain is the supreme expression of the body. Either way, thought is sensation, and art is a disturbance of the body-brain unit.

So film, which synthesizes all the arts, can get nearest to producing that synthesis of the body and brain (as in the love act) by using its full and wide powers to play on body and brain. This, in itself, would be no exotic inspiration, but the possession of persons who, like composers, have studied their art. Pavlov supports this view, which means that the most complex and delicate manifestations of the brain (equilibrations) can be resolved as mathematical formulae. It follows that films could be devised (distilled) to make a person suffer intensely any form of pain or pleasure by following a formula. This is, of course, merely an extension of the musical score.

And to any one who says that it is not art to be able to produce emotions by pressing a button, one need only remind them that what they are saying is that the primitive's joy of producing pleasant sounds by thoughtlessly striking a shell, is superior to the strict order of Bach. Only when a musical scale is established can music be written: only when the film director has an orderly instrument to play can films become part of an art comparable to music.

As yet the study of the filmic expression of emotion is chaotic. We all know now that it is the director's job primarily, and that the actor is his instrument. What we have yet to appreciate is that, while in the theory of emotion we are light years beyond Shakespeare, in practice, dramatically, we are but little in advance. Everything is now set for a great leap forward, when our theory will become practice.

Just as Pavlov stresses the importance of a laboratory free from external uncontrolled stimuli, such as traffic noises, so in the cinema, when film becomes a more exact art, it will be essential to have

- (1) the film presented exactly as cut by the director;
- (2) the temperature and humidity, colour scheme and smell of the cinema regulated according to the instructions of the director. !/!

It is not difficult to enjoy music in the obscene atmosphere of the Queen's Hall; it is much finer an experience in a suitable place. We are very immature in our contemporary ideas of the presentation of art, whether it is a picture in a scrofulous gilt frame or a film in a hot, smelly, baroque, animals' den.

Art, and to many this means film, must learn from science, and in particular from the scientist Pavlov, that its subject is man, the body-brain unit, and its method is the exact way of science. When this has been learned the time will be ripe for the new film Shakespeare.

A NOTE ON THE CAMERA AND PHILOSOPHY

by OSWELL BLAKESTON

The favourite metaphor of the time-philosopher is that of the cinematograph camera—when expounding his theory of our existence as perspectives in the flux of time. Indeed, photography might have been the invention of thinking men, a mechanism of argument.

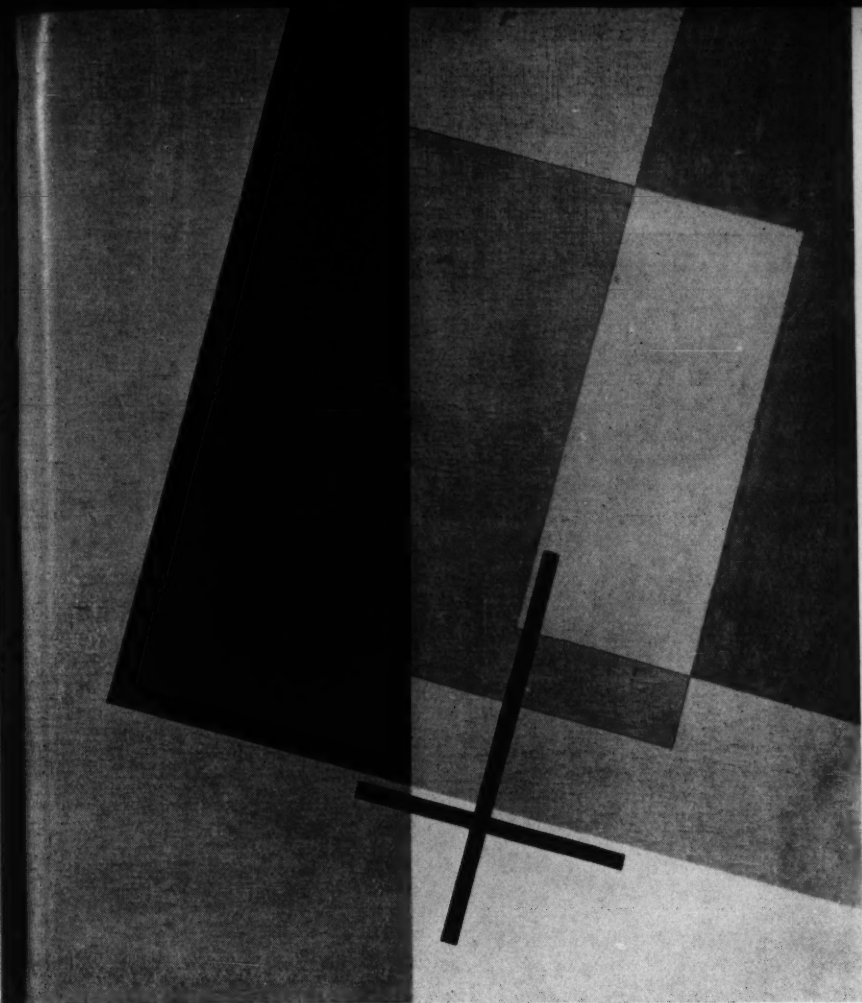
But the camera has not been nursed by the sophisticated. Photography has been thrown upon a world already satiated with inventions, whose possible significance the modern cultured man has had no time to assimilate. In other days, how eagerly the thinking man would have concerned himself with the camera. It is a pretty picture to imagine the subjective idealist trying to photograph the pink rats seen by the intoxicated.

Of course there are those who would deny that the problems of thought affect the problems of the artist. This, though, is surely the superficial view. Art is—the attempt to hold before us what the world around means to us. The artist is he who communicates to us a glimpse of that reality which underlies appearance.

It is strange how few people realize that Francis Bruguière's abstract photographs, in which he made light itself a form, are an extraordinary philosophical commentary on sense data. In *The Way*, Mr. Bruguière's most famous film, he was charting problems of fundamental value, problems which have trapped the thinking man throughout the ages in labyrinths of thought—the absolute of the God symbol, man's ethical relations in and to the cosmos, etcetera.

Now, the purpose of this note is to make a plea for the "thinking" approach to the camera. The plea is addressed to those young men and women who are supposed to be leading the way, to be doing more than the studios. Alas! most of them have solely the "artistic" approach to the camera. What about a documentary to explain why it is always about to rain in art-documentaries?

Because Bruguière, in *The Way*, was tackling problems of time and space, he evolved the tricks of technique which initiated the "golden period" of Ufa films.

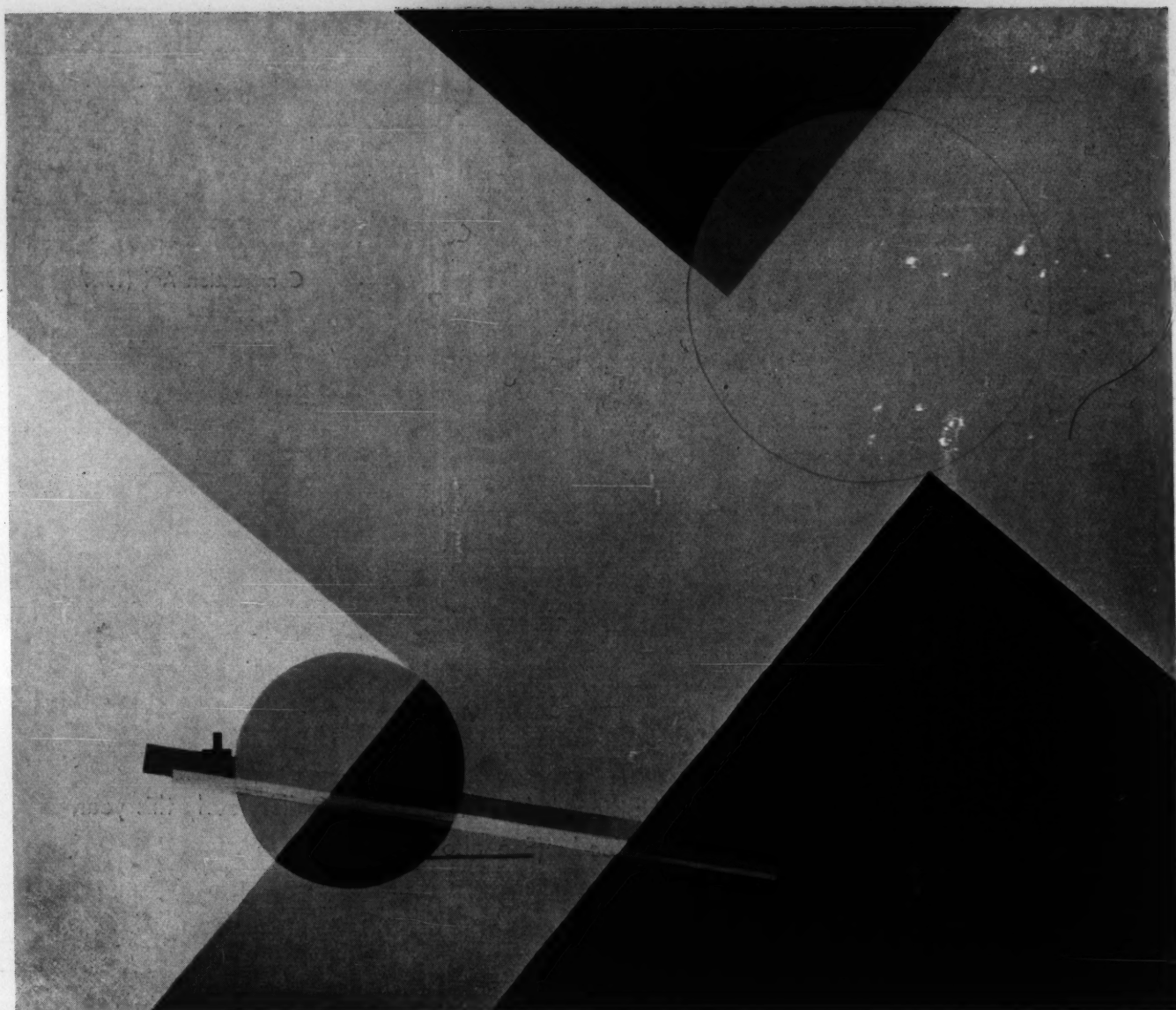


Construction AIX (1924)

From the L. Moholy-Nagy exhibition, held at the **London Gallery** early this year, discussed in this issue by S John Woods. (See also overleaf.)



Trolitpicture (1930)
Collection H. Read



Construction
(1925)
Collection
E. Frank

L. Moholy-Nagy, one of the foremost European artists, devoted to the Abstract Film, is best known to cinema-goers by his **Marseille-Vieux Port** and **Lichtspiel-Schwarz-Weiss-Grau**; also for his special effects of **Things to Come**. He was responsible for the stage sets of the German production of **Tales of Hoffmann** (1929) and **Madame Butterfly** (1931). His books include **Vom Material zur Architektur** and **Malerei, Fotografie, Film**.

CENSORSHIP—THE PRODUCTION CODE

by TAMAR LANE

Following on the Censorship Certificate in *Film Art* No. 9, we now submit an article on the *Hays Morality Code*. The writer, Mr. Tamar Lane, is author of *The New Technique of Screen Writing*, published by the McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., and reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

With censorship restrictions having grown more stringent in recent years, somewhat narrowing the scope of certain subjects and situations, especially in regard to sex and crime, authors should at least have a basic knowledge of general censorship standards before launching forth upon a screen writing career.

Censorship restrictions differ in detail in the various states and in certain countries throughout the globe. For the writer, therefore, to attempt a study of the rules and regulations of each censor board, with their constant changes and minor deletions, would be far more confusing than helpful. In addition, it is quite unnecessary for the author to make such an individual or detailed study. The studios do not demand it of him, and it would be futile for producers to attempt to shape their script in accordance with the demands of each and every censor board in regard to slight particulars. This is done later by local film cutters.

Fortunately, the restrictions of censors as a whole, however, are in most respects fundamentally the same, differing only as to details. Therefore, a knowledge of their general attitude in respect to what is considered fitting and proper for presentation on the screen will be quite sufficient for the writer to acquire.

This general attitude is comprehensively covered by the Production Code recently drawn up by the Hays Office (officially named the Association of Motion Picture Producers). The code was established for the guidance of producers, in an effort to eliminate injurious and confusing film deletions after completion of a production, as well as to set up standards for the moral and social values of cinema entertainment. If the writer follows this code, he need have no censor worries.

That the Hays Office sincerely endeavours to hold the studios to a strict adherence to the standards of this code, I can offer liberal and authentic testimony, having been for two years Hays Office contact executive and in charge of the censorship department for the RKO-Radio Studios. Many were the entanglements in which I found myself engaged with Col. Jason S. Joy, Hollywood representative for the Hays Office, when in the interests of the studio I endeavoured to draw forth an O.K. on certain parts of a story to which the Hays Office had registered an objection.

While we often differed on these film matters, I at all times found the Hays Office representatives most efficient and striving for higher cinema standards.

The Hays Office Film Code is as follows:

THE PRODUCTION CODE.

Underlying Principles of the Code.

No picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who will see it. Hence, the sympathy of the audience shall never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil, or sin.

Correct standard of life shall be presented on the screen, subject only to necessary dramatic contrasts.

Law, natural or human, shall not be ridiculed, nor shall sympathy be created for its violation.

PARTICULAR APPLICATIONS.

Crimes against the Law.

These shall never be presented in such a way as to throw sympathy with the crime as against the law and justice or to inspire others with a desire for imitation.

- (1) Murder:
 - (a) The technique of murder must be presented in a manner that will not inspire imitation.
 - (b) Brutal killings are not to be presented in detail.
 - (c) Revenge in modern times shall not be justified.
- (2) Method of crimes shall not be explicitly presented.
 - (a) Theft, robbery, safe cracking and dynamiting of trains, mines, buildings, etc., shall not be detailed in method.
 - (b) Arson must be subject to the same safeguards.
 - (c) The use of firearms shall be restricted to essentials.
 - (d) Methods of smuggling shall not be presented.
- (3) Illegal drug traffic must never be presented.
- (4) The use of liquor in American life, when not required by the plot or for proper characterisation, will not be shown.

Sex.

The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld. Pictures shall not infer that low forms of sex relationship are the accepted or common thing.

- (1) Adultery, sometimes necessary plot material, must not be explicitly treated or justified, or presented attractively.
- (2) Scenes of passion should not be introduced when not essential to the plot. In general, passion should be so treated that these scenes do not stimulate the lower and baser element.
- (3) Seduction or rape.
 - (a) They should never be more than suggested, and only when essential to the plot, and even then never shown by explicit method.
 - (b) They are never the proper subject for comedy.
- (4) Sex perversion or any inference of it is forbidden.
- (5) White slavery shall not be treated.
- (6) Miscegenation is forbidden.
- (7) Sex hygiene and venereal diseases are not subjects for motion pictures.

- (8) Scenes of actual childbirth, in fact or in silhouette, are never to be treated.
- (9) Children's sex organs are never to be exposed.

Vulgarity.

The treatment of low, disgusting, unpleasant, though not necessarily evil subjects should be subject always to the dictates of good taste and regard for the sensibilities of the audience.

Obscenity.

Obscenity in word, gesture, reference, song, joke or by suggestion is forbidden.

Dances.

Dances which emphasise indecent movements are to be regarded as obscene.

Profanity.

Pointed profanity or vulgar expressions, however used, are forbidden.

Costume.

- (1) Complete nudity is never permitted. This includes nudity in fact or in silhouette, or any lecherous or licentious notice thereof by other characters in the picture.
- (2) Dancing costumes intended to permit undue exposure or indecent movements in the dance are forbidden.

Religion.

- (1) No film or episode may throw ridicule on any religious faith.
- (2) Ministers of religion, in their character as such, should not be used as comic characters or as villains.
- (3) Ceremonies of any definite religion should be carefully and respectfully handled.

National Feelings.

- (1) The use of flags shall be consistently respectful.
- (2) The history, institutions, prominent people and citizenry of other nations shall be represented fairly.

Titles.

Salacious, indecent or obscene titles shall not be used.

Repellent subjects.

The following subjects must be treated within the limits of good taste: —

- (1) Actual hangings or electrocutions as legal punishment for crime.
- (2) Third degree methods.
- (3) Brutality and possible gruesomeness.
- (4) Branding of people and animals.
- (5) Apparent cruelty to children and animals.
- (6) Surgical operations.

A QUESTION OF TIME . . . L. Moholy-Nagy Exhibition at the London Gallery

by S JOHN WOODS

This January exhibition covered most of the many activities of Ladislaus Moholy-Nagy: painting, construction, photography, etc. In Film Art No. 7 S John Woods discussed what he considers Professor Moholy-Nagy's main contribution to contemporary art: the regimentation of space. As a re-iteration of this main aspect would be superfluous, he deals, in this article, with a perhaps minor but none the less interesting aspect, having a particular application to the film.

The mediæval painters had no care for practical everyday time, saw no paradox in portraying several events, separate in time (and space) in the same picture, spanned the hours without a qualm. They painted not persons but ideas, and to ideas time is irrelevant.

With the Renaissance and the rise of humanism ideas gradually gave way to persons, and to persons time is relevant.

The fashionable portrait painter—the abysmal end of the supercession of ideas by persons in painting. More enquiring spirits were at a loss where to turn. Three new forms developed: historical, still-life and landscape painting.

The first signs of realism are to be found in the painters' acceptance of practical everyday time. The appearance of persons or objects or places at a particular moment in time was seized upon and transferred to a canvas. Temporal realism—the start of the decay. Its finale was Impressionism, and the dead fish and game on the cumbrous sideboard. It left the great painters comparatively unaffected.

Chardin produced still-life. "Nature morte" is a much more expressive phrase. With Chardin and Poussin the subject is of no importance whatever; the valuable part of the picture is as abstract as Mondrian (only more comprehensive). Propaganda and art have parted company.

Picasso knew this. He painted still-life because there was nothing much else to paint but he destroyed its still-news, exploded his glasses and guitars and wine-bottles so that a bottle-neck joined a guitar string and a glass displayed its top as well its bottom and side.

Photomontage does the same thing. Which came first, Cubism or photomontage? (The question is of no importance anyway).

In this process the inconsequence of time was probably unconsciously re-instated. Simultaneity again appeared in pictures. Painters once more had no care for practical everyday time.

By then the practical everyday world was prostrate at the feet of Time. Every fleeting moment was scheduled. Trains to be caught, clocks to be punched, records to be won, etc., etc. "Time is money."

After Cubism the break-up of the space-continuum and of the time-continuum was consciously exploited by the surrealists to accentuate their destruction of reality. Practical everyday time became again of definite consequence only negatively, in its denial.

The other development from Cubism was abstract art, of which Moholy-Nagy was one of the leaders. In its disregard for the actual objects of the still-life, Cubism had shattered the space-continuum and the time-continuum. Abstract art denounced the still-life. What happened to time?

Although abstract art denounced still-life it retained, in the work of Moholy-Nagy and his associates, the object, only it was an object having no reference to the actual world; in Film Art No. 7 I gave this object the rather unscientific label of a "plane of light." Abstract art also extensively employed movement. Since movement can only exist in time this element must still be a part of painting. Clearly it is not the practical everyday time since the objects have no *immediate* relevance to practical everyday events (to the world of actuality). It is infinitely of time.

Moholy-Nagy has solved the problem of perpetual motion. (A grain of salt is, of course, permitted).

Infinity of time applies to most so-called abstract painting. (No painting is really abstract: its basis is still in nature and it still follows the conventional grouping: still-life (Moholy-Nagy, Ben Nicholson, etc.), figures (Miro, Hélion, etc.), landscape (John Piper, etc.)).

Ben Nicholson has exploded cups and saucers and a white tablecloth into an infinity of time. Hélion's bodies turn on their axes in infinite motion. Who will there be to hear when Piper's waves cease beating?

To others than painters too: James Joyce, Stravinsky, Dunne, Freud, to name a few leaders.

While the world was defying time and the artists again putting it to their use a new art was born, having time as one of its essential elements. The film both uses practical everyday time and creates a time of its own. Not infinite but finite and thus capable of greater subtleties.

With the exception of the surrealists the artists have probably been unaware of their dealings with time. But the film maker must be very conscious of it. (In his exhibition Moholy-Nagy showed the machine from which he made the film "Lichtspiel, Schwarz, weiss, grau." It was a pity that in this he forgot time. The movement was finite, not infinite; but the film started, ran and stopped without the moulding of time, which is as necessary to a film as to a symphony. Moholy-Nagy's non-abstract films do not exhibit this defect).

Conscious of time and consciously employing it, the film opens new vistas, probably some of them still unsuspected.

When man forgets time there may be some hope for him.

HEAVENLY METAL (Metall des Himmels)

by WALTER RUTTMANN

About six thousand years ago, Sumerians and Egyptians dug virgin iron out of the crater struck by a meteor. In gratitude they called it *Heavenly Metal*.

Our own ancestors were not so fortunate. Stone was the first material out of which primeval man created his first weapons and tools. But with these tools he found and quarried iron-ore, from which he won that shimmering treasure—steel.

In the UFA documentary *Heavenly Metal* I have endeavoured to show how iron-ore is obtained. The film takes you into deep shafts where you see miners quarrying the ore; it shows you the blast furnaces, steel and iron works in full swing, and the winding streams of glowing, molten metal in all its glittering glory in the rolling mills.

We see industrial machines in action and ships sailing the seven seas; we watch aeroplanes and motors and railroads, those means of communication between the people.

Plough and harrow, harvesting and threshing machines are the farmer's servants; culinary and domestic articles those of the industrious housewife, while toys serve to instruct as well as to rejoice the children, that future generation, destined to reap and work and invent, to use steel, the heavenly metal, for the wealth and welfare of mankind. (Or its destruction? ED.)

Modern Publicity

"There is too little film journalism that keeps pace with the development of real film art . . ."

L. J. JORDAAN in *Film Art* No. 9.

INDIA'S BEAUTY QUEEN BREAKS AWAY FROM PURDAH.

"GRETA GARBO" OF EAST TO MAKE A SENSATIONAL FILM.

Twenty-two year old SHRIMATI PRABHA, the most *dazzling, glamorous, lovely* girl from the Punjab, was finally selected today as the first Beauty Queen of All-India. She was unanimously elected by the judges as the most *beautiful* girl from among 500 *beauties* representing different Provinces of India.

Shrimati Prabha is now dubbed as the "Greta Garbo" of the East. For not unlike the world's most famous *charm Star*, Prabha has the most fascinating personality, *feminine charm, velvety black hair, liquid dark blue eyes, olive complexion, a perfect nose*, and the typical Oriental Grace with a rhythmic expression. (Whether she can act is, of course, immaterial. ED.)

Daughter of an orthodox Hindu family, Prabha is the first Society girl to tear away from Purdah system and take up Film as a career. For only a week ago she has been offered a heroine's part in the *Awakening*, an Indian production. She has also been paid the highest fees in advance, a fact unknown in the history of the film stars in India.

Only a few weeks ago this purdah girl was covering her face with a black-satin cloth to avoid men-folks seeing her. But with her sudden dramatic decision, Prabha has torn away this cloth once for all. *By her fine and daring action she has blazed the trail of a new profession* which will be followed by hundreds of other Society ladies who are now hidden away in their home.

Issued by Oriental News Agency.

EDITORIAL NOTE: You slobbered a bib full, sister!

The picture on the front cover is an actual scene from the new UFA film *Stadt Anatol*, in the course of production.

Films of the Quarter

MAYERLING.

(FRANCE).

This film is noteworthy for the sustained mood of tragic romance, its theme linking the fragile beauty of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Liebelei*—both of which are Grecian in their fatality. The choice of the Archduke between his heritage to the throne and his love is bitterly ironical; here is no compromise, no parallel to the recent event which, no doubt, made this delectable film palatable to the exquisites of Mayfair.

The acting of Charles Boyer in this picture relies on that same virtuoso-appeal that made so many tragedians popular in the role of *Hamlet*: it resembles very closely the up-and-down acting of Emil Jannings in *The Old and the New King*. Danielle Darrieux, delightful in *The Crisis is Over*, is here fragile and lovely as the theme itself.

It is a pity that the French do not give honour where it is due—to this film. The award of the year (*Grand Prix*) went to *Kermesse Héroïque*. Anatole Litvak, who directed *Mayerling*, is a Pole and therefore not eligible for this distinction.

Presented by: The Curzon Cinema.

Direction: Anatole Litvak.

With: Charles Boyer and Danielle Darrieux.

W.E.D.

THE NEW GULLIVER.

(U.S.S.R.)

It has been asserted in some quarters that it is a pity that Swift's delightful, albeit mordant, story of Gulliver should have been distorted into present-day political propaganda. One cannot but admire Ptushko's daring in so doing, and in choosing as his medium puppets, which must necessarily have entailed an incredible time of careful manipulation.

Gulliver, played charmingly by V. Konstantinov, falls asleep while hearing the reading of his favourite story, and dreams he goes through the same experiences, even to throwing the enemy's fleet to sea, as his prototype. The Court of Lilliput and the bourgeois, however unpleasant their character, make far better entertainment than the workers, all of whom seem to have been cast, for puppet purposes, in the same mould. The spectator cannot help feeling that Ptushko enjoyed playing with his king, queen and ministers far more than he did with the workers.

The animation of the puppets is by no means perfect; it is not to be compared with the growing technical achievement of Georges Pál, but, even so, emotions of the puppets are so skilfully contrived by changing bodily and facial expressions, that, for the most part, one forgets that one is only watching dolls. How many of the audience who saw the film at the London Film Society noticed the momentary shot which bore such a striking resemblance to Trafalgar Square?

Production: Mosfilm.

Photography: N. Renkov.

Direction: A. Ptushko.

Puppet Master: F. Krasny.

After Jonathan Swift.

M.C.

EDITORIAL NOTE: This film, when first presented in France, was reviewed by our Paris correspondent, Nancy Cunard, in *Film Art* No. 6. In discussing *The New Gulliver* with one of the Editors, Man Ray spoke of "a painful image by image technique, awkwardly naive . . ."

ENOUGH TO EAT; The Nutrition Film. (BRITAIN).

This film is important in its nature, origin, and purpose. Produced by a commercial undertaking, it contains no propaganda for that undertaking nor for the general commodity. It is a straight-forward statement of facts, intended for projection to specialised audiences outside the commercial cinemas. Yet it has now been acquired for theatrical distribution; an illustration of the tendencies indicated in the Editorial of *Film Art* No. 9.

The subject is, broadly, the relation between sufficient food and income. Necessarily this involves an explanation of what is meant by sufficient food. These are two general subjects. But the camera cannot record generalities, only representations of particular happenings. Generalities, since they are not actual events as such, can only be shown by symbols, such as words and diagrams. Anstey has therefore concentrated the film into the sound track, and used the screen action as a background. An occasional reversal of technique brings us to earth with the intensely particular, as in interviews with men and women recorded with the unique unvarnished vitality of *Housing Problems*.

The general method of the treatment can be illustrated by one small scene. This is a diagram showing the relation between mineral deficiency and expenditure on food. It is just an ordinary static curve of food value against expenditure, and shows all the information at once. In the film the curve appears by "drawing itself." Thus the facts enter one by one, an expectancy is created as to what it will do next, and when the curve is completed we are in a position to appreciate its relation to the facts as a whole. The facts have been dramatised, and then frozen in a grand finale. There is no reason to believe that this little scene was worked out in any exceptional detail,—there are many signs of haste throughout,—but it shows in a simple form a way of obtaining a general view. It also shows that there are other, and less futile, ways of animating educational diagrams than having the important part a still picture, and the animation confined to the irrelevant equivalent of turning over the page. Some day someone may use them.

Enough to Eat is significant in its social and cinematic implications. From the purely film point of view it shows a not unsuccessful attempt at a film that must be a spoken lecture. Anstey is to be congratulated on his handling of a very difficult problem, even if he has not completely solved it.

Production: Gas, Light & Coke Co.

Direction: Edgar Anstey.

Distribution: Kinograph.

R.A.F.

THRU THE MIRROR. (U.S.A.).

Inevitably this episode of Mickey Mouse has been described as surrealistic. Actually it is no more—and no less—surrealist than a balance sheet. It has the conventional irrationalities, but a welcome and much needed simplicity of colour, sound, and motion, together with some attempt at a plot, show that Disney is not played out yet.

Apparently Mickey is now so real a person that his looking glass adventures have to be excused by the age old dodge of a dream. Thus, in 1911, were the first animated cartoons excused by titles like *The Artist's Dream*. Their unbuffered introduction would have bruised the sense of reality of audiences, at that time soaked in the "documentary" conception of film.

Production: United Artists.

Direction: Walt Disney.

R.A.F.

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by

TAMAR LANE

342 pages 9 × 6 15s. net.

THE author, who is an editor, scenarist and executive connected with several prominent West Coast studios, deals not only with the theories but with the concrete facts and conditions to be met by the writer who hopes to succeed commercially in the cinema world. He not only shows how screen manuscripts should be written, but explains how it is done in the studios.

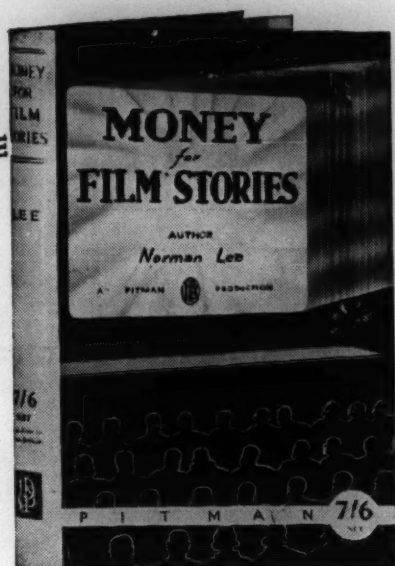
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PITMAN, Parker St., Kingsway, London, W.C.2

**HORTOBAGY.
(HUNGARY).**

A theme much in current use, especially on the Continent, by producers young in the film world, is that of the clash between the New and the Old. We find this again in *Hortobagy*; this time the setting is the last of the great horse-breeding plains of Hungary. The peasants resent the encroaching machinery of modern agriculture, but the head Csiko's son is far more intrigued with the oil engine and his bicycle than with the horse fair. Although the foaling of a mare—a sequence of an interest more pathological than aesthetic, but highly praised for its alleged beauty in some quarters—re-awakens in the boy his love for nature, the machine wins, and the father bows to the inevitable.

The film is straight forward and the cutting is adequate, without being pretentious. The camera work by Laszlo Schaeffer is beyond reproach; some of his shots are pictures of rare beauty. One of the father galloping before the oncoming storm to his injured son expresses a fear-stricken urgency that cannot fail to impress all who see it. We look forward to seeing some more of Herr Höllering, with Herr Schaeffer at his side with the camera.

Direction: George Michael Höllering.

Camera: Laszlo Schaeffer.
M.C.

**LA TENDRE ENNEMIE.
(FRANCE).**

Based on the play *L'Ennemie*, by A. P. Antoine, this film can hardly be called good cinema, but the courage of Max Ophüls, the director, must be admired for his daring experiment. The structure of the film is too complicated and its appeal based too much on dialogue to become a great success, even with the Film Societies. But those, regarding the cinema as a medium for experiment, will not be disappointed. To bring together the ghosts of the husband and his wife's two lovers at the banquet given in honour of his daughter's betrothal is indeed a novel idea, and the behaviour of these phantoms might come as a shock to Sir Oliver Lodge.

By almost masterly direction the past and the present are skilfully interwoven, and as the story unfolds itself it becomes more apparent that here we have not to do with a flippant tale, but a brilliant psychological study.

The camera work of Schufftan is inclined to be flashy, since he spares no trick known to him to create atmosphere. By photographing the past in a blue-ish light, he succeeds, however, in keeping the sequences apart. The composition, at times, is beyond reproach and credit should go to the art director, Jacques Gotka. Some of the scenes, especially in the bar and back-stage *Cirque Medrano*, are reminiscent of the post-impressionist period, in particular the paintings of Manet.

The cast has been selected with discrimination.

Production: Eden Productions.
Direction: Max Ophüls.

Photography: Eugene Schufftan.
Art Direction: Jacques Gotka.
J.C.M.

**HELENE.
(FRANCE).**

The synthetic stories of Vicky Baum seem to lend themselves to screen adaptation. Hollywood ruined *Grand Hotel*, but France made a creditable job of *Lac aux Dames* and *Helene Wulfür*, on which this film is based.

It will go down to history not as a good, but as a very sincere film, skilfully treated and faultlessly acted.

Jean Benoit-Levy has given ample proof in *La Maternelle* that he understands his leading lady, Madeleine Renaud. Again she dominates the picture and it is her great personality that makes one forget the thinness of the story.

The direction is very competent, but the cutting, at times noticeable jerky. The camera, however, especially in the open air sequences is used with great imagination . . . and discretion.

Made with pretence as a commercial film, this picture badly shows up the Hollywood product, particularly in the casting. American leading ladies and leading men would do well to study the stars of this French production.

Like *Lac aux Dames*, *Remous* and *Marchand d'Amour*, its emotional-sexual appeal should carry it far. But it stands far above the smutty interpretation of similar themes from our own and the American studios. Instead of making "sin" a grim, messy affair, it is here presented as a passionate flame, strong and clear, burning itself out on the altar of experience.

In watching Madeleine Renaud one is frequently reminded of Elizabeth Bergner as she once was; only that she has a far greater emotional range.

Direction: Jean Benoit-Levy.

Photography: L. H. Burel.

Production: Les Films Marquis.

Adaptation: J. Benoit-Levy and Marie Epstein.

J.C.M.

RAINBOW DANCE.

(BRITAIN).

Len Lye not only knows what film is, but makes it so. *Rainbow Dance* is in a sense a ballet about a man who uses the Post Office Savings Bank. More correctly, it is a dramatic sequence of moving marks centred round this idea. The whole is conceived in terms of the final marks on the screen, not in terms of substitute images representing real events elsewhere. The camera has been used, but only as a technical convenience. The *negatives* of scenes with strong highlights and dark backgrounds, (which come out as black markings on a clear background), are combined with images made directly on the film by mechanical means and by hand. The colour is not the so-called "natural colour," formed by a more or less erroneous analysis of the colour of some real object, followed by an equally faulty synthesis. It is colour formed and controlled as directly as by the brushes of an artist. Lye has dispensed with the original coloured object, and begins with the synthesis. Three identical films are varied severally in intensity so that when dyed in different colours and combined, they produce the desired hues. (In the usual process the variation in intensity is produced automatically by colour filters over the camera lens.) In places these coloured components have been deliberately combined out of synchronisation, so that one image of one colour is accompanied by others of different colours going through the motions the first has performed or is about to perform.

In spite of, or because of, this courageous escape from the second-hand photographic image, the film is easy on the eyes and intelligence. The beauty of the action is enhanced by the use of slow motion in the original negatives, though obviously "slow motion" has no more significance than plain "slowness" in the final result, for there is no "natural motion" with which to compare it.

This is one of the few films that have dealt as directly with the screen image as the painter with his canvas. All others show images that are symbols for something else the director would like to, but cannot, show.

Production: G.P.O.

Direction: Len Lye.

R.A.F.

THE EXPANSION OF GERMANY 1870—1914. (BRITAIN).

An admirably clear educational film, one of six experimental diagrams on the lines of the French *Three Minute Films*. Too often animation is used to cover the transition from one still diagram to the next, forgetting that motion is more noticeable than shape and therefore should be used to interpret essentials, not to distract the attention to what is virtually the turning over of the page. Here animation is used to give the idea of growth and development, an idea difficult to acquire from strata of fossilised facts. The merits of this film come from an obviously deep collaboration between the animator and director. Mr. Jeffries' drawing and motion have a typographical clarity.

The commentary is restrained. Good as it is, it should have been omitted and notes supplied for the teacher to transcribe into his own words, suited to his own individual pupils. As it is, this film can be used only by schools with talkie projectors.

Production: Mary Field.

Direction: A. Miller Jones.

Animation: R. Jeffries.

Distribution: G-B Instructional.

R.A.F.

FEAR. (FRANCE).

The film is based on the novel *La Peur* by Stefan Zweig. It matters little whether the story has been followed closely or not; the important fact is that the director has succeeded in bringing out clearly the theme of how *fear* can arise from a misunderstanding of the most innocent events.

La Peur is a superbly photographed picture and, except for an excess of camera movement and one or two posed frames, well directed. The cast includes Gaby Morley and Charles Vanel, while little Gaby Fauguet and Mireille Coluzzi give cameos that make the work of certain child stars look stilted and precocious.

The court scenes are interesting; most American court rooms are overlighted, while the common people look surprisingly like well dressed extras. Except for *Mr. Deeds*, *Fury*, *La Robe Rouge* and a few others, there have been no dramatic court scenes. This film must be added to the list.

The film opens most excitingly with a fine rendering of the famous Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto.

Production: Ilia Salkind.

Direction: V. Tourjansky.

Photography: Tirar.

Music: Michel Levine.

W.E.D.

A SCRATCH MEAL. (BRITAIN).

The straightforward statement of plain fact is difficult in any medium, and particularly in film. Elton is one of the few who can do it, and about the only one who does do it. One of his virtues is to find out the facts, not merely the appearances, before he begins. "Anyone could make a film of Marcel Boulestin cooking a meal." Perhaps they could; more likely they would make a clever film with cooking as an excuse for its existence. Moving shadows on a flat screen are inadequate representations of physical events, but Elton uses this inadequacy to isolate everything but the essential. A proof of his success is that audiences are consciously interested in M. Boulestin's technique and unconscious of Elton's.

The film is distributed by The Gas, Light and Coke Co. for non-theatrical distribution through local gas undertakings. (Theatrical distribution through A.B.F.D.) The only advertising in the film is the use of a gas cooker (anonymous) by M. Boulestin, and a single reference to the Company in a spoken epilogue.

Production: Gas, Light & Coke Co.

Distribution: A.B.F.D.

Direction: Arthur Elton.

R.A.F.

Film Index

REGINE, which had its premier presentation at the Forum Cinema, London, is an Erich Waschneck production directed by Herman Grund and with camera work by Werner Brandes. To those interested in misunderstood themes we recommend this film. The portrayal of the naive servant who marries a rich engineer justifies all that is expected of Louise Ullrich after her acting in *Liebelei*. The film is strongly reminiscent of *Liebelei*, but happily avoids the tragedy of that romance.

ON PARADE, is sponsored by the Horlick's Malted Milk Company and directed by Georges Pál. It is a pleasing puppet film on conventional lines, in which "night starvation" is put in its appropriate setting. On the technical side the animation is too jerky, with too few intermediate stages, and the sharpness of outline is not quite up to standard.

FREDLOS, a film whose failure as a commercial showing is deplorable, has all the majestic dignity of *Enn Natt* and the other Swedish films. The music—including excerpts from Sibelius' *Finlandia* and *Valse Triste*—beautifully fit the visuals. The story is essentially national, but of international appeal since the facts are closely paralleled in the Fascist dictatorships of today.

Strand Films have made for the Air Ministry a film showing some methods of aeronautical research used in Great Britain. It includes some of the visible air flow photography of Dr. Townend (mentioned in the last issue), and shows the operation of some of the apparatus used at Farnborough. One of these is the 24 foot Wind Tunnel for testing full scale aeroplanes, and this thing that has arrived makes *Things to Come* even more shadowy. The impressiveness was produced by concentration on straightforward exposition, letting "effect" look after itself. The tremendous reality being so sure, that it need not advertise. The producer was Arthur Elton; the director, Stanley (*Chapter and Verse*) Hawes; photography, Onions; Air Ministry liason, Robert Fairthorne. The film has been shown in the U.S.A. by the Institute of Aeronautical Sciences, and by the Royal Aeronautical Society at a *Conversazione* on 12th January. The film was produced primarily for projection at a function of The Institute of the Aeronautical Sciences (U.S.A.) in December, 1936. The German and Italian governments have submitted parallel films.

Books of the Quarter

ONLY YESTERDAY, A Play in Three Acts by Adrian Brunel (Geo. Newnes, 2s. 6d.).

To disregard conventional methods in film production is very original and very dangerous, and this is precisely what Adrian Brunel did some fifteen years ago. In his first full length feature film he was "artistic" to a perilous degree, earning the condemnation of critics steeped in Hollywood commercialism. For full four years his punishment endured. He was rescued from his dungeon of relegation by Michael Balcon and Ivor Montagu, the latter urging a film story, not of war, but its repercussions. *Blighty* was the eminently successful result.

Mr. Brunel's words in his "Introduction" are worth quoting:—

"My reason for writing the play . . . Working on the film recalled many memories that I wanted to record in a more permanent medium than celluloid.

When I look over my collection of newspapers of the war period, I am ashamed of the picture they give of my people during that time, and in defence I offer what I believe to be a true portrait of some average people who were not so completely de-civilised. It is my documentary of the home front."

This is an eloquent argument for scenarios to be published in book form. It is accepted as a common-place that films should be made from plays. It is rare for this procedure to be reversed and a film to be made into a play.

Mr. Brunel has proved that he knows his job. *Filmcraft* is his: a treatise on the technique of screen work, also *Film Production*, an eminently practical guide, especially for amateur films. *Printed Scenarios* was his contribution in the last issue of *Film Art*.

Appreciation has been slow in materialising, but those who are privileged to know him have quiet confidence that this modest student of the cinema will make good when the belated meed of justice is his.

The history of publishing is interesting, especially in the "best sellers" which have been refused by publishers. It is amazing how obtuse these gentlemen are to the work of a creative artist. Theatrical managers are no less obtuse than publishers, hence we find that *Only Yesterday* had to be published in book form before those controllers of theatrical destiny could be induced to regard this most interesting work as a possibility for production. Even the tyro in matters of the film or stage will recognise the genuine merit of this play. The film, from which it was adapted, was an emphatic success. Why should not the play be likewise?

A.M.

THE NEW TECHNIQUE OF SCREEN WRITING, by Tamar (McGraw-Hill, 15/-).

This book achieves what it sets out to do, to be a definite guide to those interested and occupied in the profession of scenario writing. It should help to rid the amateur of the notion that film writing is a simple job which can be acquired at a moment's notice.

Mr. Tamar Lane, himself an editor and scenarist, is conversant with the difficulties confronting the layman, and the book covers such important subjects as story construction, dialogue and the handling of the material, at the same time pointing out what is in demand and giving advice on the faults to avoid and on submitting and marketing the script. Special attention has also been given to the laws regarding copyright and protection.

The passages on story construction form the most important contribution, for here one is introduced to the three different forms of composition for story presentation on the screen: the dramatic, the literary and the composite. A further chapter is devoted to treatment as it relates to pace and movement of the story and as it concerns a special handling of the individual scenes, sound effects, incidents or situations.

The New Technique of Screen Writing is not a dull treatise, but rather an interesting survey of present-day conditions in the commercial cinema. The reader is given a glimpse behind the scenes of the big studios and obtains an insight into the working of the scenario department and of how the merits of a story are judged in terms of popular appeal.

Particular interest is paid to the different styles and forms in which a story may be written for consideration and possible purchase by the studios, and how the original story is finally adapted. As an example of continuity, *Transatlantic-Merry-Go-Round* has been selected in its complete form.

The McGraw-Hill Publishing Company have placed a number of copies of this book at the disposal of the Editors, and readers may obtain their copy direct from the Editorial Office, The Studios, 5, Steynings Way, London, N.12.

J. C. M.

FILM MUSIC by Kurt London (Faber & Faber, 12s. 6d.).

The sound film has done much harm to the musical profession, but in one way it has done good: it has brought uniform and specially composed musical scores, rendered by first-rate orchestras, to the remotest villages in the country.

Although films were never presented without accompaniment, it was only towards the end of the silent days that picturegoers became conscious that the musical score played an important role in film presentation. It was probably Edmund Meisel, whose illustration of *Potemkin* added so much to its success, who set a standard in film music. Slowly musicians became aware that here was an entirely new field to conquer and to be developed, and from that day onwards well-known composers devoted themselves to this new medium. To-day names like Darius Milhaud, Walter Leigh, Arthur Honegger and Paul Dessau are well known to audiences, and their presence amongst the credits guarantees that the visible-audible development of the film will be perfectly harmonised.

Film Music covers the history of musical accompaniment from the beginning to the present day and is a splendid textbook for the musical student. The layman can satisfy his curiosity by comparing, for instance, the work of Edmund Meisel in *Symphonie einer Weltstadt* with that of Hans Eisler in *Komsomol*. It may then surprise him to see that Eisler's score does not synchronise with Joris Ivens' visual image, but that the film is a case of one common subject treated by two entirely different artists in their own manner and medium, rather than that of a corresponding visible and audible rhythm.

J. C. M.

Film Societies

OXFORD FILM SOCIETY.

Considerable interest and success attended the showing of Eisenstein's *October* on January 24th. The film was shown in its entirety, and it is believed that this is the first time it has been shown in Oxford.

The main feature for the meeting on February 7th will be Ucicky's *Savoy Hotel 217*, supported by *The Mine* and Lye's *Birth of the Robot*.

On February 21st *Die Ewige Maske* will be shown, together with an early Disney cartoon produced about 1922—*The Great Train Robbery* and *The Expansion of Germany*.

Several requests have been received for the showing of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. It is unfortunate that there is no copy available for general distribution to Film Societies. Perhaps someone will invest the necessary capital for a new print. The venture would undoubtedly receive support from the Societies.

WOLVERHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY.

November meeting exhibited *Bonne Chance*, *Cable Ship*, and *Little Chimney Sweep*; on 4th December *Housing Problems*, *Colour Box*, *Nursery Island*; and on 6th January *Wings Over Everest*, *20th Century*, *Diet and Nutrition*, *Rainbow Dance* and *Chapter and Verse*. Two meetings held in February; on the 3rd the G.P.O. Film Unit exhibited *Night Mail*, *Weather Forecast*, *Granton Trawler* and *Upstream*; and on the 10th the Society saw *Student of Prague*, *Birth of the Robot*, *L'Hippocampe*, *Brumes D'Automne*, and *Coal Face*. Hon. Programme Secretary: E. L. Packer, Himley Crescent, Goldthorn Park, Wolverhampton.

HULL FILM ART CLUB.

Now in its third year. All the old "classics" have been shown, and the Society would welcome suggestions for a further list. Some of Lotte Reiniger's films were presented, and she attended the meeting personally to lecture on Silhouette Films. On 15th and 16th March *Thunder Over Mexico* and *Death Ray* will be the main films.

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